



# Rozyłowicz

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**Feliz Navidad - Feliz Año Nuevo y Buena Suerte from Dolores and Ed.** A Happy Holidays to one and all. This year we elected not to send the customary Holiday cards. Instead, we're mailing some exciting news in the form of this newsletter. To start, we have been sort of busy lately. As you may have noticed from the letterhead, we have moved from the Land of Lincoln (Illinois) to the "Land of Enchantment" (New Mexico.) With Dolores' retirement (finally, after 44+ years at Sears) it was time for a change - a major change. We have chosen to follow the sun and plant our new roots at a most unlikely destination (unlikely at least to some), the Southwest - New Mexico Southwest. And we're delighted with our choice. Great community, pleasant weather, ample services, and a quality of life that will be easy to get used to. And where is Las Cruces, New Mexico?

As shown on the map, we're only 50 miles Northwest of El Paso, Texas, and light years away from the typical urban fast pace. Las Cruces is not a backwater town. Las Cruces rests in the fertile Mesilla Valley just east of the Rio Grande, the American West's principal river. The City rests at an elevation of 3,896 feet and enjoys a moderate climate with an average of 350 days of clear weather annually and prevailing southwesterly winds. These factors make the City of Las Cruces a very exciting, colorful, and comfortable place to live. It's a medium sized city of 78,000, and is considered one of the 10 fastest growing areas in the country. It is rapidly becoming the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest city in New Mexico.



(←) New Mexico is recognized for its beauty and topography. The Organ Mountains form a majestic backdrop to the city.

In case you're curious, in Spanish, Las Cruces means "a place of the crosses", named after a caravan was massacred by Apaches in 1830 and the crosses that marked the graves suggested the name Las Cruces. Las Cruces is the gateway to all the culture and tradition of the southwest.

To get to this retirement/relocation stage was not easy. As we all know, Dolores believes in procrastination. She was "maniana (tomorrow)" before even moving out here. Which means that she's quite ready for the laid back approach to living so common out here. Anyway, with her lack of planning for her pending retirement it was up to me to get the ball rolling. And plan I did. First we had to sell our Sleepy Hollow home. Quietly, I planned and organized this sale with the precision of a military drill. Created an Internet web site, brochures, flyers, and newspaper ads. Of course - we planned to sell it ourselves, without a broker. But before placing the house on the market, a trip had to be made to the Southwest to pick that ideal locale. What if the house sold fast and we were not ready? Going somewhere on a vacation is not the same as looking for a retirement spot. Priorities are quite different. Having visited and appreciated the American Southwest, it was only a matter of picking the specific locale that was the issue. Since Dolores was unable to travel due to job and mother commitment, I traveled alone in August to search for that spot. Found it! But did not tell Dolores of my choice. Did not want to influence her. After the house sold, we would travel together to those same places and allow her to form her own opinions. Then we would compare our choices and arrive at a mutually agreeable spot.

We placed the house on the market in late August. With no surprise, it sold in 5 weeks, end of September. Halleluia! This is a testament to knowing what one is doing, pricing the house properly and aggressively marketing the property (self praise here) - plus a fair measure of good luck thrown in. However, a problem -- had to vacate by early December. Ho boy - have to travel back and find a house pronto. By mid-October we were back (together) in the Southwest. Our first stop was Las Cruces. No need to go any further. Dolores took an immediate shine to the area. This is the place, she proclaimed. When Dolores speaks positively (a rare occurrence -- remember she is a true "maniana"), Ed listens. Dee's choice was also my first choice.

We spent a week looking at properties with the help of an excellent buyer's agent. This agent listened to our "wish list", and concentrated only on those homes that met our criteria - and there were plenty of choices. Our looking time was fast paced but not frantic. Then, we found the house, but, alas, it was under contract already. Since nothing else we've seen met Dolores' strong sense of need for a gourmet kitchen and my need for a good "value", we decided to pursue this house anyway. Devising a strategy with our agent, we presented a carefully crafted, but very strong, back up offer for this property and left town, as time was running out. We figured, if we could not buy what we wanted, we'd rent after our arrival and build-to-suit later.

Are we good or what? Either through a brilliant strategy or plain dumb luck, our stronger offer was good enough to prevail. And the house - here it is:



No, that's not a volcano in the background. That's Picacho Peak. In Spanish, "picacho" means peak – so it's Peak Peak. Go figure! And yes, that's high desert vegetation. No more grass cutting, yard work, watering, or any such unnecessary work. A rake is all that will be needed to rearrange the "crushed gravel" which forms the driveway and pebbles that comprise most of the natural landscaping. This house is located in a "gated community" of similar (but more expensive) homes. Lot size is a generous 1¼ acres. House is nearly 3,000sf (4 bedrooms), a little smaller than our Sleepy Hollow home. Single level, no basement, no attic, and no spare rooms for storing "junk." The house photo does not do justice to the elegance within. And the views – well, from the patio the broad vista view of the Mesilla Valley and greater Las Cruces takes one's breath away -- especially at night. Maybe not a million-dollar view as some other homes have but sure beat looking at your neighbor's back fence. It will be some time before we take all of this for granted.

No – the house is not made of mud and sticks. Although adobe is quite popular in the Southwest, it is pricey. This house is frame construction using 2x6 and 2x8 framing (for excellent insulation.) The exterior is elastomeric stucco. Up close and personal, it is stunningly attractive and virtually maintenance free. The kitchen is, as some would say, "to die for!" Dolores got her wish. More on that later.

Shifting back to the planning, you may ask, "What about Dolores' mother? What about Helen?" According to Dolores, Helen had one of two choices – go with us or go with us! We knew that this would be the single stumbling block in our relocation plans. For a 93-year-old, Helen may be frail, but her mind and wit is still a force to be reckoned with. As such, during our return trip to Las Cruces, we did explore alternative-care facilities, sort of similar to Casa san Carlo, her current home. And, we found one that was ideal. New, modern, affordable, no waiting lists, and best of all, within 10 minutes of the house we were pursuing. The decision was made – but how do we tell Helen that her future daily menu will include salsa and Chile relenno. Dolores said – ".. not to worry! Maniana!" OK, she's your mother. Now the mind game begins.

From that point on, we experienced the usual array of problems associated with moving half way across the country. Logistics, timing, verification of progress on any number of points, PLUS the issue of how to we break the news to "mama." If ignorance is bliss, Helen was in heaven. Not a clue – didn't even know we were out of town scouting. But, as all good things must end, Helen was told of the pending move on Thanksgiving Day. We were ready to call 911 in the event "mama" went ballistic on us. But surprisingly, she took the news without any major resistance, other than "I don't like Arizona!" Arizona? Well, Dolores told Helen that she was retiring "to a place like Arizona." If Helen was told she was moving to NEW Mexico, Helen would most likely believe we were taking her to a foreign country. Dolores' way of thinking was to sugarcoat the news without adding confusion. I'm not sure it worked out as expected, but Helen still thinks she's moving to Arizona. I suppose that's about as good as we can expect for now. Just get Helen there and the rest will take of itself. Proof that it worked? Here's Helen in her new assisted-living home in the land of milk-and-honey. Or is it salsa-and-chips? Does she look happy? If any of her friends are inclined to call her, Helen's number is (505) 556-0173. Amazingly, Helen still does not understand why we cannot find her favorite Oak Park (IL) Polish radio station. Didn't mention it, but Dolores and Helen flew to El Paso, while yours truly and the cat (Brandy) trudged our way Southwest by car. No good deed shall go unpunished, and this was one of them.



The preparation for the move, the closing on Sleepy Hollow, and the actual move was relatively pain-free, although not stress-free. We closed on our new home on Dec. 14<sup>th</sup>, and moved Helen and ourselves into our respective homes the same afternoon. As anyone who's moved a long distance knows, it's not exactly a walk-in-the-park. I'm certain we'll be unpacking and looking for misplaced items for weeks (months?). Christmas may be without a tree and festive decorations this year, but the excitement of a new home with its resulting enjoyment will keep our minds focused for some time.

I mentioned earlier Dolores' "dream kitchen." Thinking that our Sleepy Hollow home had a most modern of kitchens, the one that this house has is most surprising. The builder (Desert Sage) built this particular house as a "showcase" house. He really outdid himself on this one -- particularly the kitchen. Since Dolores and I both spend a lot of time cooking (until other retirement plans kick in), it was imperative that our new home's kitchen allow us to continue with our gastronomic interests. The location, layout, appliances, ambient light, open floor plan, and general feeling of "comfort" was quite important. As we all know, when entertaining, people tend to congregate and concentrate in the kitchen – the center of all activity. With this kitchen, all that is possible. As proof, here's Dolores preparing her new specialty – "roadrunner casserole", or is it "jackrabbit stew?" Using **Chile**, of course.



For those of you who are already retired, you know and experienced the trepidation of retirement. What will I do now? No job! No sense of being appreciated! No schedules to keep me occupied! Yeeeeesssss!!!! And about time. This is a chapter in one's life where what others think is not important. I believe Dolores and I will settle into this retirement routine with gusto.

Friends -- do wish us well on this retirement we are about to experience. It was a long time coming. After 44+ years of non-stop working, Dolores deserves all the comforts and conveniences that can be bestowed on her. She has truly earned it. Me – I'll just coattail her. Someone has to plan the travels and set the itinerary, right! Taking a breather from our (my) unpacking, this photo shows us sitting on our "critter wall" (as they are affectionately called here, as in "keep the critters (snakes) OUT"). Dee may be smiling but I'm just plain tired. Still, we feel blessed and plan to enjoy this newfound corner of paradise and the start of our "golden retirement years." With God's help we will continue to enjoy health, prosperity, and the New Mexico lifestyle.

In closing, to all of our friends, may this 1999 Holiday season be a most memorable one for you and your family. May the upcoming New Year bring you continued good fortunes. We'd love to hear from you when your time allows. God bless!